Improving Workplace Reporting Systems for Gender-Based Discrimination: An Analytical Study in HEI's in Rajasthan

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CELL

THE ICFAI UNIVERSITY, JAIPUR

Submitted By :

Scholar Name : Shruti Shekhawat

Enrollment No. : 23RDCDIUJDD01007

Supervisor Name : Dr. Shiv Kumar

ABSTRACT

Gender-based discrimination in the workplace (especially HEI- Higher Educational Institution) remains an unescapable issue that undermines professional environments and hinders equality. In spite of workplace policies and legal frameworks, HEI's continue to face challenges in reporting, investigating and resolving such incidents. These challenges often lead to underreporting of these cases, silencing of victims and lack of accountability for perpetrators. The aim of the research study is to critically examine existing workplace reporting systems of HEI's in Rajasthan and identify gaps that prevent effective resolution of gender-based discrimination cases. This study will follow mixed-methods approach that include both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to understand comprehensively victims experience, the effectiveness of current organization systems, and its responses. In addition, the study will explore innovative strategies to enhance transparency, access, and trust in reporting mechanisms, and ensure that they are survivor-centred and justice-oriented. This research seeks to contribute to the development of robust reporting systems by identifying best practices and proposing actionable solutions for HEI's in Rajasthan. These solutions will prioritize fairness, maintain accountability and promote a safer, more inclusive work environment. The results of the research will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, organizational leaders, and advocacy groups of HEI. These will help to prevent gender-based discrimination and promote workplace equity in HEI's.

1. INTRODUCTION

The workplace environments at HEI's are expected to preserve principles of safety, inclusivity, and respect for all employees and students. However, gender-based discrimination continues to be a persistent issue that undermines these ideologies. It not only impacts the individual's psychological well-being, professional development, but also the overall institute's harmony. Despite significant efforts in policymaking and awareness campaigns, various HEI's still struggle to implement effective reporting systems that can persuade victims to come forward and hold perpetrators accountable. The challenges in workplace reporting systems in HEI's are manifold. Victims typically face barriers such as fear of retaliation, lack of confidentiality, and doubts about the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, HEI's may unintentionally prolong these issues due to inadequate training, insufficient resources, or biases in investigative processes. These drawbacks not only discourage reporting but also contribute to a culture of silence and impunity, where discrimination goes fallacious.

The aim of the research is to bridge the gap between theoretical aspects and practical implementation by examining existing reporting systems and identifying their limitations especially related to HEI's in Rajasthan. The study aims to provide actionable insights about system restructuring that will prioritise victim empowerment, procedural transparency and accountability. By taking into account an interdisciplinary approach that bring together legal standards, organisational behaviour principles, and technological innovations, this study attempt to create a roadmap for organisations to address gender-based discrimination more effectively for HEI's in Rajasthan.

Gender-based discrimination (GBD) is a global issue, in spite of legislation that aimed at to protect (GBD) in the workplace, it remains a serious issue in workplaces especially to culturally diverse environment like Rajasthan pose unique challenges for its prevention.

Although legal mechanisms such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013 exist, the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms for women at workplace is closely monitored. Yet victims are often hesitant to report incidents due to a number of factors such as social taboos, organizational hierarchy and fear of retaliation. The combination of the previously mentioned aspects leaves an impression in our minds that is a relatively rare reaction compared to current impressions.

Whereas the POSH Act ("Protection of women from Sexual Harassment Act", 2013) was a huge dive towards embark upon workplace harassment, but its implementation is seeing some challenges. Various research and report illustrates a gap between the laws and facts. (Singh & Pandey, 2019) According to the law, internal complaints committees may not have the necessary independence, expertise or resources to carry out broad and impartial inquiries. Furthermore, a significant portion of the Indian workforce, particularly the unorganized sector, is informal and represents a critical challenge for applicable and enforced laws (Sifma, 2018).

It is not only a legal landscape, but also a deeply rooted cultural factor. Traditional gender roles, patriarchy and stigma associated with reports of sexual harassment can promote a culture of silence and immunity (Chakraborty & Chatterjee, 2020). Victims are also under pressure from their families and parishioners to not report due to feared social and reputable anti-relatedness. (Investigation Report Essays: Examples, Topics, Outlines, 2012) Organizational hierarchies and power relationships also have ways to exacerbate discrimination-related

situations so that victims do not resurrect from discrimination by their superiors or influential colleagues. (Gelles, 2016)

Gender-specific discrimination in the workplace has proven to be an important obstacle to achieving gender-specific fairness and justice, especially in culturally complex environments such as India (Basow & Martin, 2012). Despite high-level legal frameworks such as sexual harassment (prevention, prohibition, compensation) of women in the workplace in 2013, gender-specific discrimination remains an omnipresent topic. Recent research shows that almost 58% of working women in India have been abused in some way, but due to lack of tort and fear of retaliation, the report of the case remains an important challenge (Bhat & Deshpande, 2017; National Crime Records Bureau, 2022). This situation undermines both individual dignity and organizational efficiency, making it important to improve reporting mechanisms to effectively deal with these injustice. Undesirable behaviour of a verbal, non-verbal or physical nature based on a person's gender infringes upon his or her dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment (MacKinnon, 1979. The organizational and legal framework is designed to enable victims to lodge complaints and seek redressal for workplace discrimination (Kalyar, 2015). Various theoretical perspectives provide a basis for analysing discrimination at workplace and its reporting mechanisms. There are assumptions that discrimination often arises from power imbalances in hierarchical organisations, with perpetrators exerting dominance over subordinates (Baugh, 1997).Social learning theory explains how cultural norms and workplace practices disseminate discrimination through learned behaviors (Bandura, 1977). It highlights the role of perceived fairness in processes such as reporting and redress in promoting trust and compliance (Greenberg, 1990).

The perseverance of gender-specific discrimination in Indian educational institutions can be ascribed to cultural and structural factors. The hierarchical organizational setup related to social norms that prioritize male domination, discourage women from reporting discrimination due to exclusion or fear of career repercussions (Chaudhuri, 2008; Srivastava, 2004). Furthermore, existing reporting mechanisms, including Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) and platforms such as She-Box, often face operational challenges such as, such as inadequate training, bias, and lack of awareness among employees (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2023).

Improving reporting mechanisms at HEI’s requires not only legal compliance, but also cultural changes within the educational institute to create the environment, allowing women to express

themselves. This study will adopt an analytical and strategic approach. This study aims to understand existing framework that aligns with the cultural and organizational realities of HEI's in Rajasthan. There is a need for stronger recognition of High Point Laws (POH) and their safeguards, especially in those sections of society that require protection and effective enforcement of laws with strong monitoring and enforcement systems. Culturally adapted training programs for HEI's are needed to break down patriarchal attitudes, encourage gender equality and make individuals feel safe in reporting cases (Strenio & Chowdhury, 2021). The ICC needs to be provided with the necessary resources and autonomy to conduct fair investigations, including ensuring confidentiality and protection of victims. Technology solutions such as anonymous reporting platforms in HEI's can promote transparency and at the same time mitigate the process of distributing news sticks. Collaboration with government departments, nonprofits and other related associations will develop multi-stack strategies to combat gender-specific abuse.

This study seeks to dissect the multi-dimensional dynamics of legal, cultural, cultural and structural forces that shape gender-specific discrimination in the HEI's in Rajasthan. It also suggests practical steps to create safe, fair and respectful educational institute. This research work will focus on higher educational institutions in Rajasthan, agreeing on interventions and strategies for these industries to positively impact ESG performance. (Raval et al., 2018) This study also tries to examine possible adaptations of best practices of the industry that take into account cultural nuances in India (SIFMA, 2018).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender-based discrimination in workplaces remains a global challenge that exceptionally impacts women. In India, especially in Rajasthan, the corporate hierarchy and cultural norms often prioritize male dominance in the workplace. The effective reporting mechanisms are significant to ensure a fair work environment. This literature review examines existing research to contextualize gender-specific discrimination and reporting mechanisms and focus on the interactions and impacts on Indian labor culture.

The occurrence of discrimination in the Indian workplace is deeply rooted in its traditional gender and social norms (Sharma, 2022). The respective research shows that 70% of Indian women are exposed to some form of discrimination in former employment, but 25% report these cases because of fear of retaliation and reputational damage (Kumar & Rao, 2021). The

hierarchical and collectivist nature of Indian work reinforces the problem, and the dynamics of power often prevent victims from seeking redress. Numerous theories were used to examine workplace discrimination. The Power-Dynamics theory postulates hierarchical differences promote discrimination, especially in male-dominated industries (Morley, 2013; Patel & Singh, 2019). Organizational climate models highlight in what way work environments and leadership styles impact discrimination prevalence and reporting behavior (Ghosh et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of reporting mechanisms such as the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), as defined by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013, was the focus of the latest research. Although ICCs are intended to provide complaints in a safe manner, research shows that procedural delays and lack of awareness limit their effectiveness (Varma and Joshi, 2021). The introduction of digital platforms such as She-Box has improved access, but this is not enough due to limited publicity (Karle & Battle, 2024). Indian workplace culture is characterized by collectivism which discourages the individual from reporting discrimination for fear of disrupting group harmony (Mehta and Bhardwaj, 2020).

Gender norms, such as expectations of subordination from women, further impede reporting behavior. This cultural context requires adaptation of reporting mechanisms to adapt to social values, while simultaneously promoting trends and safety (Chatterjee et al., 2021). Indian researchers have looked into various aspects of workplace discrimination. Ramesh et al. (2022) highlighted regional differences in the prevalence of discrimination and linked them to literacy rates and economic potential. In the meantime, Singh (2020) considered the role of training programs in raising awareness and reducing reporting-related stigma. Research has determined numerous factors that influence the likelihood of reporting nuisance. Organizational support and leadership are strong predictors of reporting behavior (Pandey & Gupta, 2021). Furthermore, training programs that raise awareness of rights and reparation mechanisms will improve reporting rates (2022).

In HEI's, gender-based discrimination remains a ubiquitous issue with far more continuous consequences for victims and institutes (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Research highlights the fact that discrimination affects women, predominantly women in marginalized communities, including LGBTQ+ (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Willness et al., 2007). These studies show important psychological and professional effects, including increased anxiety, depression, reduced job satisfaction, and increased workforce attrition. However, the emphasis

on prevalence often obscures the study of systematic barriers to reporting and redressal, mainly in culturally complex contexts such as India especially in Rajasthan.

An effective reporting system is fundamentally important to combat workplace discrimination. Framework conditions such as internal HR complaints, external whistle blower hotlines, and anonymous platforms are extensively popular (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008). In spite of these structures, victims often find these systems ineffective based on factors such as: victims hesitate to report discrimination due to potential career impact, the lack of security associated with anonymity reduces trust in the system, and reporting systems are often incorrectly aligned with the functioning sociocultural context.

Indian work is characterized by hierarchical structures, collectivist values, and tightly fixed gender criteria. All of these affect the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms. Research such as Mehta and Bhardwaj (2020) have been published in Chatterjee et al. (2021) highlight the role of gender criteria in the design of workplace interactions and performance dynamics. Although there are several important gaps in the literature on reporting mechanisms, broadly documented and implementable strategies for combating potential areas remain limited. Present framework settings often prioritize victim psychological wells and safety during the reporting and resolution process. The reporting mechanism lacks adaptation to cultural nuances, particularly in various contexts such as India (Patel & Singh, 2019). Limited studies have examined the long-term impact of reporting systems on organizational trust and employee loyalty (That, 2022).

Organizational justice underlines the fairness and transparency of organizational processes, and stresses that victim's report discrimination if they perceive the system as fair (Bondestam and Lundqvist, 2020; Colquitt et al., 2001). In the Indian context, this theory addresses the need to create trust building mechanisms within hierarchical job structures. A feminist perspective set to combat the structural roots of discrimination through the implementation of challenging patriarchal norms and transformative guidelines (Mackinnon, 1979). This approach is very important for Indian work, and traditional gender roles have a significant impact on job dynamics especially with respect to HEI's of Rajasthan. Social exchange theory reviews cost-benefit analysis that victims analysis when report discrimination. Underreporting occurs if the perceived costs, such as career damage or social exclusion, exceed the benefits (Blue, 1964). This theory supports the development of systems that minimize risk and increase reporting rewards.

Insights from Key Studies

Study	Focus Area	Key Findings	Gaps Identified
Fitzgerald et al. (1997)	Prevalence of discrimination	Developed "Sexual Experiences Questionnaire" for assessing discrimination	Limited focus on systemic barriers to reporting.
Morley (2013)	Leadership and Representation	Underrepresentation of women in senior positions in HEI's.	Limited focus on change to address such issues.
Willness et al. (2007)	Psychological and career impacts	Identified significant consequences of discrimination	Lack of actionable recommendations for addressing underreporting.
Bondestam & Lundqvist (2020)	Sexual Harassment in HEI	Poor reporting system and responses in HEI's	Improper protection for victims, lack of preventive strategies.
Cortina & Berdahl (2008)	Reporting mechanisms	Highlighted mistrust and perceived inadequacy in systems.	Insufficient exploration of victim-centric frameworks.
Barrow & Martin (2012)	Student Evaluations and Gender Bias	Female instructors receive lower evaluations due to gender bias in educational industry (HEI's).	Evaluation systems not adjusted for known biases.
Colquitt et al. (2001)	Organizational justice	Emphasized fairness in promoting reporting behaviors.	Limited application to diverse organizational contexts.
Mehta & Bhardwaj (2020)	Cultural barriers in India	Explored cultural influences on reporting in collectivist societies	Lack of adaptive mechanisms for collectivist cultures.
Das (2022)	Training and system effectiveness	Found that awareness programs enhance reporting behaviors.	Minimal focus on long-term organizational impacts.

3. PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Statement of the Problem

Workplace discrimination especially at HEI's is a serious issue that affects the health of employees and students, the effectiveness of institute, and social justice. Although there are laws like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, workplace discrimination at HEI's targeted at either gender continues to prevail in India. Several factors contribute to its continuance today: underreporting; lack of awareness; cultural stigma; and weaknesses in the current reporting systems at HEI's.

This problem gets further entrenched in Rajasthan due to deep-rooted organisational hierarchies and cultural structures that impose collectivist values, discouraging any form of personal initiative like reporting discrimination. Several hurdles plague victims' complaints: fear of retaliation, doubts about confidentiality, and lack of trust in ICCs. Besides that, while platforms like She-Box are great innovations, accessibility to them and awareness thereof are limited.

3.2 Significance of Study

Gender-based discrimination forms part of the dominant challenges against gender equity in most culturally diverse settings. The Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 addresses sexual discrimination against women. Gender-based discrimination remains an endemic issue. The current studies suggest that about 58% of working women in India face some form of workplace discrimination at present; nevertheless, underreporting continues to be a critical issue because of stigma and fear retaliation (Bhat & Deshpande, 2017; National Crime Records Bureau, 2022). This condition disproves personal dignity while frustrating organizational efficacy, thus making the need for enhanced reporting mechanisms capable of effectively addressing these injustices.

Gender-Based Discrimination: Any verbal, non-verbal, or physical behavior directed at a person's gender that undermines the person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment (Mackinnon, 1979).

Reporting Mechanisms: Structures organizational and legal put in place to allow the victim to lodge a complaint and seek redress for discrimination at work (Kalyar, 2015). Indian working culture is characterized by a unique blend of hierarchical frameworks,

collectivist principles, and prevailing traditional gender roles that shape interactions within the workplace (Thomas, 2015).

3.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the accessibility of workplace discrimination reporting systems of HEI's in Rajasthan.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of existing redressal mechanisms of HEI's in Rajasthan.
3. To explore the influence of organizational culture on reporting behaviours.
4. To explore the challenges in the path of successful implementation and running of discrimination reporting system by HEI's in Rajasthan.
5. To provide actionable insights for policymakers and organizations of HEI's.

3.4 Hypotheses

Based on the identified gaps and research objectives, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. **H1**: Enhanced accessibility to HEI's discrimination reporting systems significantly increases the likelihood of victims reporting incidents.
2. **H2**: The perceived effectiveness of redressal mechanisms of HEI's in Rajasthan positively influences employee trust in HEI's discrimination policies.
3. **H3**: An organizational culture emphasizing inclusivity and ethical behaviour fosters greater reporting behaviour among employees of HEI's in Rajasthan.
4. **H4**: The integration of victim-centric practices in reporting mechanisms reduces underreporting and enhances victim satisfaction with resolution outcomes of HEI's in Rajasthan.
5. **H5**: Barriers such as fear of retaliation, societal stigma, and lack of confidentiality significantly hinder the utilization of workplace discrimination reporting systems of HEI's in Rajasthan.

4. METHODOLOGY

This section covers the research design, sampling techniques, and tools for data collection on the topic "***Improving Workplace Reporting Systems for Gender-Based Discrimination: An Analytical Study in HEI's in Rajasthan"***. The methodology is intended to evaluate

accessibility, effectiveness of workplace discrimination reporting system and its impact in organizations culture.

4.1 Research Design

For an in-depth analytical study, this research will take a mixed-methods design that will use both quantitative and qualitative research methods to ensure an integrated understanding of workplace discrimination reporting system of HEI's in Rajasthan. This approach will investigate its effectiveness and impact on HEI's work culture. The present research will be descriptive cum exploratory in nature for better understanding and revealing workplace discrimination reporting system and its impact on HEI's culture cum productivity.

For this purpose, the researcher will use both descriptive and exploratory approaches. It will describe the functioning of the workplace discrimination reporting system of HEI's in Rajasthan. The research study will explore various factors such as access to the reporting system, its effectiveness, and the influence of HEI's culture.

4.2 Sampling Techniques

Sample Size and Determination:

Sample size need to be determined for higher population size. Since the population of the research is very large and finite, an adequate sample size would be surveyed, so that the final responses for analysis remains above the sample size defined by the Cochran's formula. As far as the sample size for qualitative research is concern, it would be taken based on the Delphi method.

4.3 Sources of Data

To understand and analyse a comprehensive view for workplace discrimination reporting system for HEI's in Rajasthan, this particular research will use both primary as well as secondary sources of data collection methods.

i) Primary Data Collection:

The population of the study consists of various parties involved in discrimination case such as individuals and HEI's official's especially teaching and non-teaching employees, and students. Thus, stratified random sampling is best fit for the current research study for quantitative data collection. However, for qualitative data collection, the purposive sampling will be used to take

responses from selected parties with direct experience in discrimination case or workplace discrimination reporting system.

ii) Secondary Data Collection:

The main secondary sources of the data collected for the research and literature review is from published articles, research reports, government publications etc. The authentic sources of information would be used to extract secondary sources of information such as annual reports of HEI's and other documents found suitable for the study. The researcher will also try to inculcate previous case studies of workplace discrimination of selected organization if found suitable for the research. A pre-approvals and permissions will be obtained from HEI's for research purpose whenever required.

4.4 Tools for Data Collection:

For the collection of the information, a well-structured set of questionnaire on a five-point Likert scale, with some dichotomous questions would be used for collection of primary information from the respective respondents. A combination of both focus group interviews, and personal interview may also be conducted to get deeper insights about the actual status of the workplace discrimination reporting system. The personal interview may also consist of both close ended and open ended questions for getting deeper insights about the actual problem.

5. DATA ANALYSIS / DISCUSSION

It is one of the important part of the complete research, the analysis of the observed data so collection during the study will include both quantitative and qualitative data. Appropriate tools and techniques of analysis would be used based on the type of the data so collected. Different analysis tools would be applied to derive meaningful insights regarding workplace discrimination reporting system's accessibility, its effectiveness and impact on HEI's in Rajasthan.

5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

As far as descriptive statistics are concern, the researcher would use frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, rank order, etc for basic analysis and summarization of the surveyed information so collected from respondents. However, tools like t-test, ANOVA, correlation etc would be applied for uncovering different relationship, patterns, and finding out results for research hypotheses testing. Additionally, the possibility of using factor analysis would provide

in-depth results for successful implementation of workplace discrimination reporting system. The analysis of the quantitative data will be done using IBM SPSS or R software or any other statistical tools best suitable and available at that time would be preferred for analysis of the data.

5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

For Qualitative data analysis, the researcher will use thematic analysis process to identify patterns, themes, and insights from the interviews, focus groups, and case studies. Similar kind of approach will allow the researcher for a detailed exploration of respondent opinion on discrimination cases and its impacts on HEI's culture. The analysis can be either done using manually or by using analysis software like NVivo or any other software found suitable for study. Special attention would be provided while making themes for qualitative analysis to ensure accuracy.

Lastly, the Interpretation of Findings, and conclusion will be made to understand the data and results so obtained during the tenure of the research. This will provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between effective workplace discrimination reporting system and organization culture w.r.t. HEI's in Rajasthan.

6. LIMITATIONS & DELIMITATIONS

6.1 Limitations

Limitations exists with the scope of each research, particularly with some geographical limitations of the study, sample size calculation, response personal biasness during survey, interview biasness and focus group responses. Any research study has to be completed with some time duration in mind, it is not possible for any researcher to extend the research duration by his own, thus, research observations and findings would be influenced by time constraints. Also, there may be certain limitations related to the data access and availability of data on time, it may further impact the overall research.

6.2 Delimitations

There exist some delimitations for the current study such as-

The overall research study will entirely focus on the responses from those HEI's in Rajasthan that are having established reporting frameworks and individual who are willing to participate. Those HEI's that are not having established reporting frameworks and individual who are

unwilling to participate will be excluded. The researcher will focus the study by taking responses from individuals and organization's officials or whomsoever seems fit with the research objectives during the progress of work would be included.

7. WORK PLAN OF THE RESEARCH

Proposed Time Frame	Milestone to be Achieved
5-6 Months	Review of literature
4 -5 Months	Preparation of questionnaire and publication of first research paper
5-6 Months	Survey and data collection
6-7 Months	Data analysis interpretation and publication of second research paper
4-5 Months	Compilation and submission of thesis

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